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ABSTRACT

In 1989, Prince George's Community College (PGCC) received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to support a 4-week summer seminar in Greek mythology for humanities faculty. The seminar, entitled "The Nature and Function of Greek Mythology," provided enough financial compensation to free the faculty from summer school teaching, allowing their participation. Week one of the seminar offered a review of modern approaches to Greek mythology, while the lectures, films, and sessions in week two centered on the function of myth in Greek society. Week three, as well as each afternoon of the entire seminar, was set aside for individual research, seminar paper preparation, and consultations with the instructor. In the final week, participants studied the influence of Greek mythology on Western literature and art. Following the seminar, a series of lectures on mythology were organized. The seminar also inspired two subsequent grant-funded activities. In 1990, the Maryland Humanities Council funded nine public lectures entitled "Masks and Myths," featuring scholars, artists, and members of the PGCC faculty. In 1991, the National Endowment for the Humanities funded a statewide summer seminar, entitled "The Greek Experiment," on the PGCC campus which was open to 20 Maryland community college faculty. In 1992, PGCC was approached by the Community College Humanities Association with a proposal to develop a national seminar focusing on the study of ancient Greece. "The Greek Character," offered at Georgetown University during the summer of 1992, was the result. The seminars gave birth to a wealth of additional activities, and generated both intellectual excitement and collegiality on campus. (JMC)

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Humanities Study at Prince George's Community College

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From Myth to Reality:
Humanities Study at Prince George's Community College

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In 1989, Prince George's Community College (Maryland) conceived a scholarly project that gave birth to a thriving set of scholarly offspring that have continued to enliven the faculty and advance the humanities.

Year 1: 1989

In 1989, the Price George's Community College received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to support a four-week summer seminar in Greek mythology for humanities faculty. The seminar was designed to meet the need for intellectual renewal and revitalization of a tenured and experienced faculty facing heavy teaching loads with little time for scholarly pursuits. The seminar's project director was Isa Engleberg, professor of humanities and coordinator of faculty and academic services. Faculty members, Lyle Linville (History) and Marianne Strong (English), served as co-coordinators.

The seminar, entitled "the Nature and Function of Greek Mythology" provided enough financial compensation to free the faculty from summer school teaching so they could concentrate on the study of Greek mythology. The seminar was conducted by Dr. Bernard M. Knox, director emeritus of Harvard's Center for

Hellenic Studies in Washington, DC. Supplementing Dr. Knox's lectures were presentations by several distinguished classics scholars. The seminar focused on understanding the essence of mythology, its purposes and functions in Greek society, and the application of the study of myth to a variety of intellectual disciplines.

The first week of the month-long seminar offered a review of modern approach to Greek mythology: Freudian, Jungian, structuralist, linguistic, and anthropological. The lectures, films, and sessions in week two centered on the function of myth in Greek society. The third week, as well as each afternoon of the entire seminar, was set aside for individual research and seminar paper preparation, with the opportunity for consultations with Dr. Knox. In the final week of the seminar, participants studies the influence of Greek mythology on Western literature and art. All participants prepared papers on related subjects reflecting individual discipline interests.

Several of the final papers were published, reflecting the broad range of interests of seminar participants: "Mythic Elements in Rational Thought," "Mythic Echoes in Contemporary Teenage Fiction," "Iphigenia as Play and Film," "The Capture of the Past: Ethnic 'Spin' and Ancient History," "Circe: From Fantasy to Nightmare."

Years 2 and 3: 1990-1991

The Greek mythology project at Prince George's Community College gave birth to a wealth of additional activities and generated both intellectual excitement and collegiality on the campus. Following the seminar, a series of lectures on mythology were organized, featuring a well-attended public lecture by Dr. Knox on "The Iliad: A War Poem," The instructional area newsletter Instructional Forum began a regular column entitled "Mythoskepsis," a newly coined word meaning "looking at myth," in which seminar participants described their research projects.

The Greek mythology project also inspired two subsequent grant-funded activities. In 1990, The Maryland Humanities Council funded nine public lectures on Greek mythology entitled "Masks and Myths" featuring scholars, artists, and members of the Prince George's Community College faculty. (See poster)

In 1991, the National Endowment for the Humanities funded a statewide summer seminar on the college campus open to twenty Maryland community college faculty entitled "The Greek Experiment." The project director was Lyle Linville; Marianne Strong and Alicia Juarrero (Philosophy) served as co-coordinators. Seminar lectures were organized around the Greek "inventions" of democracy, drama, and ethics and were presented by Donald Kagan, dean of Yale College, Bernard Knox, and Alfonso Gomez-Lobo, professor of philosophy at Georgetown University.

In 1990, the Greek Mythology Project at Prince George's Community College was named as an Exemplary Humanities Program by the Advancing the Humanities Project sponsored by the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC) supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. In 1991, the Greek Experiment Project was added to Prince George's Community College's list of exemplary programs. Project directors Isa Engleberg and Lyle Linville served as humanities mentors for community colleges in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Florida, South Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland.

After Year 3: 1992 and Beyond

After two successful humanities seminars, the Community College Humanities Association approached Prince George's Community College with a proposal to develop a national seminar focusing on the study of ancient Greece. As a result, a national seminar entitled "The Greek Character" was offered at Georgetown University during the summer of 1992.

In addition to humanities projects that focused on ancient Greece, Prince George's Community College was successful in applying for local grant assistance to sponsor other humanities projects: Masks and Myths in 1990, The Shakespeare Project in 1991, and The Opera Project and Christopher Columbus: Encounter and Exchange in 1992.

The benefits of advancing the humanities at Prince George's Community College have been significant. President Robert I. Bickford, President of PGCC has stated:

> The NEH-funded Greek mythology project has transformed our humanities faculty into enthusiastic and productive humanities scholars. The seminars and follow-up activities have demonstrated how a commitment to faculty scholarship can improve faculty morale and instruction, while better serving the entire college community. In less than two years, Prince George's Community College has become a mecca for humanities programming in Maryland.

The seminars gave birth to a wealth of additional activities and generated both intellectual excitement and collegiality on campus. The value to the faculty has been incalculable. One participant described her experience in the first seminar as follows:

> We were a community of scholars for the first time, twenty of us, from various humanities disciplines, reliving the intellectual excitement that drew us to the academic world so many years ago. What joy to talk to each other about books and ideas, not committee work and campus politics. (At first embarrassed about not knowing the meaning of "authochthonous," it later became a password among the "chosen few.") We sought out and critiqued each other's papers, which were the first scholarly works many of us had written in years. The fear and tentativeness everyone express about writing quickly gave way to the excitement of discovery, of having something we wanted to say.

Once the faculty was confident they had something to say, there was no stopping them. Proposals to humanities funding agencies are now being developed on Emancipation and the Civil War, West African French Literature, The Blues, and the Origins and Meaning of Mysteries. Beginning with a few good ideas and a small group

of faculty, Prince George's Community College has moved from myth to reality in humanities education.

References

The above report is a compilation of excerpts from the following articles about humanities programming at Prince George's Community College:

Engleberg, I. (1990). The Greek mythology project. Community College Humanities Review. 11, 15.

Eisenberg, D. U., Gollattscheck, J. F., Metcalf, D. H., and Shapiro, B.C. (1991). Advancing humanities studies at community, technical, and junior colleges. Washington, DC: American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, 20-23.

Masks & Myths

PRESENTATIONS ON GREEK MYTHOLOGY

FORUM I— Greek Myth: Gods, Men, and Women

OCTOBER 31, 1990

Nobility Seduced: Women and Ladies in The Odyssey
The Rennie Forum, 7:30 p.m.

Dr. Victoria Pedrick, Associate Professor of Classics at Georgetown University, will discuss the roles of women—both common and noble—in Homeric culture, and their relationship to the larger warrior society of ancient Greece.

NOVEMBER 28, 1990

Ariadne's Thread: Classical Mythology and Contemporary Poetry
The Rennie Forum, 3:00 p.m.

Dr. Dale Sinos, Associate Professor and Chair of Classics at Howard University, will read and discuss modern poetry as influenced by the themes and characters of Greek mythology.

DECEMBER 5, 1990

Greek Drama on Film
The Rennie Forum, 3:00 p.m.

Mr. Jay Schlossberg-Cohen, Director of the Maryland Film Commission, and Mr. Edward Cockrell, Director of Film Programming at the American Film Institute, will discuss contemporary film versions of Greek dramas (*Medea, Iphigenia, The Trojan Women*).

FORUM II— Greek Myth: Then and Now

FEBRUARY 20, 1991

Classics Unbound
The Rennie Forum, 7:30 p.m.

Dr. Sheila Murnaghan, Associate Professor of Classics at the University of Pennsylvania, will explain how the literature of a Western, male-dominated, and warlike society can have value and meaning for people of diverse social and cultural backgrounds.

FEBRUARY 27, 1991

Reflections of Ancient Greece in America
The Rennie Forum, 3:00 p.m.

Dr. Wilford Scott, lecturer in the Education Department of the National Gallery of Art, will present a lecture and slide presentation on how America's artistic vision is rooted in the ideals and art of ancient Greece.

MARCH 20, 1991

The Light of the Gods
The Rennie Forum, 3:00 p.m.

Through film and lecture, Ms. Judith Andraka, chair of the Prince George's Community College Art Department, will discuss how the Greek artists of the 6th century B.C. reflected the new philosophy of and interest in "man as the measure of all things."

FORUM III— Greek Myth: New Perspectives

APRIL 3, 1991

Discovering Myths: Language, Culture, and Self
The Rennie Forum, 3:00 p.m.

Dr. Joseph O'Connor, Associate Professor of Classics at Georgetown University, will discuss how myth transmits cultures and promotes a sense of community. Dr. O'Connor will focus on the links between traditional tales and education.

APRIL 10, 1991

A Platonic Symposium: Modern Issues in Ancient Myth
The Rennie Forum, 3:00 p.m.

Prince George's Community College faculty will explore how Greek myth can be taught and enjoyed in light of contemporary social issues: the celebration of cultural diversity, the horror of modern warfare, the development of contemporary literature.

APRIL 17, 1991

The Iliad: A War Poem Brought to Life
The Rennie Forum, 3:00 & 7:30 p.m.

Dr. Alan Wade, Associate Professor of Theatre at The George Washington University, will interpret passages from *The Iliad* based on Dr. Bernard Knox's lecture "The Iliad as a War Poem." Dr. Wade will recreate the clash between Greeks and Trojans immortalized in this epic poem.

All lectures are free and open to the public. The Rennie Forum is located in the Largo Student Center of Prince George's Community College, Largo, Md. Masks and Myths was made possible with funds from the Maryland Humanities Council, Inc. through a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Project Director: Isa Engleberg; Coordinators: Lyle Linville and Marianne Strong.

For More Information,
Call Dr. Linville at 322-0537 or Ms. Strong at 322-0576.

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